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# The Library Assistant

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THE LIBRARY ASSISTANTS' ASSOCIATION.

VOL. XV.

EDITED BY HENRY A. SHARP.  
(Central Library, Town Hall, Croydon).

No. 3.

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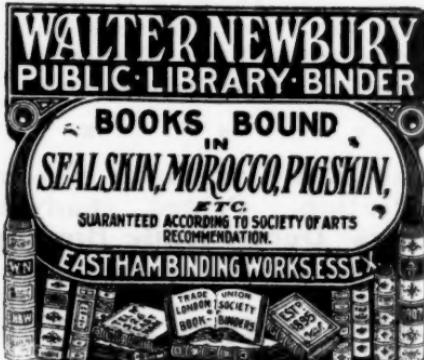
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*The Official Journal of the Library Assistants' Association.*

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## ANNOUNCEMENT.

The Sixth Meeting of the Session will be held at the **Central Public Library, 598, Fulham Road, S.W.**, on Wednesday, **10th March**, at **7.30 p.m.**, when a paper by **Miss M. Gilbert**, Librarian of the Lyceum, Liverpool, entitled :—"Librarianship of the Future: three essentials—amalgamation, qualification, specialisation," will be read.

The Borough Librarian, Mr. Walter S. C. Rae, is entering very heartily into the arrangements and will gladly explain the features of the system in operation to any members who care to get to the Library before the time announced for the commencement of the meeting. This is another favourable opportunity for the studiously minded to see the methods of a progressive administration, and it is hoped our members will not be slow to take advantage of it. The subject for discussion is one in which all may be expected to take part, especially now, when there is every prospect of a wide development of Librarianship.

**The Examinations.**—As we go to press the news reaches us that the following subjects have been set for the essays in connection with the forthcoming Examinations, which will be held during the week commencing 10th May. Last day of entry, 10th April.

*Literary History.*—The influence of the French Revolution on literary output in England to 1830.

*Bibliography.*—The problems of reconstruction in connection with the effects of the Great War.

*Classification.*—The value of a knowledge of classification in general education.

*Cataloguing* — A short history of the schemes for co-operative cataloguing, with a review of present possibilities of such a scheme.

*Library Organisation.*—In the Final Report of the Adult Education Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction, one of the recommendations is :

"It is imperative that Local Education Authorities should take a large and important place in the development of adult education. The increasing co-operation of Local Authorities is a vital need, and non-vocational adult education should be regarded as an integral part of their activities."

Prepare a scheme showing the possible co-operation of the Public Library in this work.

*Library Routine.*—The provisions of the Public Libraries Act, 1919, and their possible effect upon future library administration.

As this year's Examinations are not being based on the revised Syllabus, we presume that the paragraph on page 70, to

the effect that the subjects will be announced in the *Library Association Record* and the *Library Assistant* not less than four months before the examination, does not apply. We are informed, in response to our request for information, that "the subjects in future shall be advertised yearly in *The Athenaeum* during the first week in December."

We are further informed that the Senate of University College has decided that three or more certificates of the Library Association shall be accepted towards the Diploma of London University.

Students having one or two certificates and desiring to take the course at the School of Librarianship, must sit again for these examinations. The examinations of the Library Association for the Diploma of the Library Association will be conducted as usual. A Preliminary Test will be held on 12th May. Last day of entry, 10th April.

**Annual Meeting.**—In June it is proposed to celebrate the twenty-fifth birthday of the L.A.A. by a two-day programme in London, particulars of which will appear in our next issue. It is hoped that many provincial assistants will be able to attend. Any London member who can offer a night's hospitality to a provincial colleague is requested to communicate with the Honorary Secretary as soon as possible.

**News from Germany.**—Mr. Clifford Fuller, B.A., formerly a member of our Midland Branch, and now secretary to the British Consul at Stettin, has sent us the following paragraph, which he has extracted and translated from the *Ostsee Zeitung*:

"Astonishment reigns in professional circles, owing to the appointment of the Social-Democrat Deputy Heinrich Erkens, **Merchant** in Cologne, as librarian of the Cologne University. This is the first occasion on which the appointment to such an important office at a Prussian University has been given to one who is a merchant, and consequently outside the profession."

We are grateful to Mr. Fuller for sending us this note, and in wishing him every success in his new career, we hope that we shall have the pleasure of receiving further notes from him of professional interest.

**The Financial Situation.**—The Council at their last meeting had under consideration the question of increasing the Annual Subscriptions to the Association and *The Library Assistant*. They will recommend the adoption of the following scale to the Annual Meeting in June, *viz.*:-

Fellows, 12s. ; Members, 8s. ; Associates (assistants of 18 and under), 4s. Subscription to *The Library Assistant*, 8s.

"It's your money we want," but only for *your* benefit. Like all other institutions, we have suffered from the heavily increased

cost of administrative requisites. In pre-war days we had a 20-page Journal, which cost, roughly, about £90 per annum. We want to give you a 16-page Journal now, and to do this will require £130 per annum. To enable the Council to carry on, and, if possible, enlarge the scope of their work, we hope the decision at the Annual Meeting will be to give us the increased Subscription, thus showing appreciation and confidence in the Council, whose labours are solely for the benefit of the Association.

J.F.H.

**The "Manual."**—The new and revised edition of Brown's "Manual of Library Economy" has just been published.

## PROCEEDINGS.

### THE POSITION OF THE JUNIOR ASSISTANT.

BY A. E. CUMMINS.

The February General Meeting was held at the Chelsea Public Library on Wednesday, 11th February, at 7.30 p.m., Mr. J. H. Quinn, Borough Librarian, being in the chair. Prior to the meeting many members availed themselves of the opportunity of visiting the various departments of the library under the able guidance of Mr. Quinn. The minutes of the previous meeting having been taken as read, Mr. Cummins read his paper, of which the following is the substance. An excellent discussion followed, which, it is hoped will result in something more being done to assist our junior colleagues in the early days of their careers.

The subject for discussion to-night has been in my mind for some time, for as you will all readily agree, the position of the junior assistant is one which may well cause concern. I have long desired to hear this problem discussed, and now, in the period of Reconstruction, it seems a specially fitting time to take stock, to examine frankly the evils and failures of the past, and by earnest discussion formulate a policy for the future. Admittedly, all grades have been neglected in the past, but with those in the senior positions I am not now concerned. They should be capable of fighting their own battles, or at least, of putting forward their own case. We have learned to fight for the rights of weak and small nations, who have been oppressed. Let us now co-operate to secure better conditions for the junior assistants. Our re-building of the profession must commence from the bottom, not in securing better conditions for chief and sub-Librarians.

At a recent meeting of this Association at Stoke Newington, I raised the query, "Are Librarians an educational body?" In asking the question, I had in my mind the position of the junior assistant. In criticising any suggestions I make, or in disputing any of my criticisms, please bear in mind that I base these upon

the assumption that we do claim to be an educational body. But I would ask : "Can a body which has failed to provide reasonable educational facilities for its assistants—referring especially to juniors—justifiably claim to be called an " educational body ?" This term is used, I imagine, because we seek to be an educational aid to the public, but if we neglect the education of the junior assistant, are we not rather in the position of a man who stands in a market place, and between spasms of coughing offers for sale a " sure, certain and speedy " cough mixture, guaranteed instantly to remove the most troublesome cough ?

You may say with pride, " Oh, but we have the School of Librarianship." In my opinion, this does not meet the case. There we have largely specialised education, and what I advocate is a continuation of sound general education. Very few of the applicants for junior assistants' posts have had college education ; in fact, probably the majority have not had secondary education. In the past, too many people have " drifted " into library work. Hours of employment have prevented attendance at Polytechnics, and private tuition was too expensive. Even had salaries been sufficient to cover such cost, at many libraries, especially larger ones, after about a year's service it has been expected that assistants should attend the professional classes. Thus a specialized training left little time for general education. Sooner or later, many assistants realized that the profession held no bright prospects for them. But with a specialized education, where were they to turn ? Certificates for Library Routine, Library Organisation, etc., held no weight elsewhere. It is a real tragedy that many, really unfitted for library work, thus got in a rut and were unable to move. Who does not know these people, who have been 20 to 30 years in one place, still in subordinate positions, with not even sufficient ambition left to attempt to move on. I suggest that for the junior it is far more important to have a correct knowledge of the English language written and spoken, than to hold professional certificates. If the first few years were devoted more to general education, the assistant would be of more use to the public, because he would have a knowledge of many subjects, and be able to assist the reader in choosing books. The discipline of continued education would assist him in passing professional examinations later on, when he had definitely decided for Librarianship. Admittedly there are chances of *self-education*, but at the age of leaving school there is a throwing off of restraint, and such a general restlessness, that application and steady self-discipline are rare. If this is really an educational body, the educational welfare of every assistant must be a matter of concern. I would urge that

authorities and librarians give deliberate encouragement to general education. Let us remember that a librarian should know something of everything and everything of something, and strive to assist all to reach that ideal, for I fear it would be correct to say that every junior could recommend a good novel, but not many could recommend good books other than fiction. How are we to prevent this "getting into a rut?" Do we advocate big salaries for junior positions? A living wage certainly, but to pay too well would kill ambition. The question of salaries will, we hope, not be a source of trouble in the future. What becomes of surplus juniors now? Of my early colleagues, two laid down their lives, one is a professional 'cello player, one a civil servant, one an electrician, one a clerk, and two others have taken up different work. But they say their certificates were of no use to them, and library experience was of no use. A few still remain in the profession, but of these some have tried to change their vocation.

A new system is needed. My own suggestion is that juniors, when appointed, should receive every help and encouragement to persevere in general education. Some will not prove to be suitable for professional training, but they would be gaining knowledge which would stand them in good stead when they sought other employment, which they could be invited to do before they reached the maximum for juniors. Those who, after a few years still showed enthusiasm, and promise, could then be sent to our School of Librarianship, for professional education. To these it would be of real value, and it would be a good investment to whoever paid their fees, because they would be enthusiasts. In large libraries the junior staff deal with far more borrowers than do the other assistants, and the public form their opinion of the library largely from the junior assistant.

Concrete facts are needed to show the faultiness of the present system. My training as a junior was at a place always mentioned in a hushed, awestruck tone. I would not breathe a word against any individual there, from many of whom I have received great help, and to whom I owe a great deal. But oh! the red tape, the petty persecutions of the junior by the system. I signed many typewritten sheets of instructions, whilst there, "as duly read and thoroughly understood." Such officialdom is what the junior rebels against. We often stood round the cases talking rank mutiny. Then the intricate forms to be initialled for work done. Is there always such an endeavour to "fix the blame," to catch assistants napping? Let us humanise the work and not spend time looking for mistakes. The junior assistant does not wish to be a cog in a machine. He

wishes to live, to be treated as an individual, as an intelligent human being.

The value of recreation must not be forgotten. I now desire to hold my training ground up as a pattern. In the formation of staff guilds, such as exist there, is the solution of many difficulties. It is a humanising influence, and prevents the iron of officialdom entering too deeply into the soul of the junior. It helps to create good feeling and understanding between the various grades. As hours of duty prevent assistants from indulging in recreation with their own friends, the Guild provides recreation, such as tennis and boating, and a day's excursion in the summer. As an educational factor too, it is important, when elocution classes, Browning circles and other educational features are inaugurated. This "comradeship" will go far to banish the nervousness which prevents some from passing professional examinations.

In London, neighbouring Libraries are sometimes so near as to be able to combine in the feature.

The provincial libraries are again a real difficulty in this respect, but perhaps in small libraries the relationship between various grades is different, and a greater comradeship and spirit of mutual help exists.

Finally, I would ask, What is the position of the L.A.A.? Does it really attract juniors, and does it help them? It did not attract me as a junior. I paid my subscription because a junior who did not do so was a rank heretic. The discussions did not interest me vitally, and I felt I could not speak because so many of my seniors were there. Always the same few speakers seemed to be on their feet. The presence of chief librarians is almost a guarantee that their juniors will not join in discussion. And what power have the juniors of making their desires known? They have no direct representative on the Council. Surely they may be forgiven if they consider the L.A.A. as seniors' preserves. A junior who attended the Easter schools was looked on with suspicion by his fellow juniors.

I am quite convinced that a great possibility exists for the L.A.A. to increase its power and utility by having a little more consideration for the junior. I trust suggestions in this direction will be made.

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#### SOUTH COAST BRANCH.

A meeting of the South Coast Branch was held at the Hove Public Library, on Wednesday, January 21st. Mr. A. Cecil Piper, City Librarian

of Winchester, and a Vice-President of the Branch, presided over a capital attendance.

The chief feature of the meeting was an extremely able and interesting address by Mr. H. Mew, of Hove, on "The Public Library and the Future." Quite naturally, Mr. Mew based his remarks on the situation created by the passing of the "Public Libraries Act, 1919," and its possible effects on the existing library activities of the country. He also endeavoured to read the "signs of the times" with respect to the establishment of new library systems. Mr. Mew's paper was followed by a discussion, those taking part including the Misses Gerard and Young, and Messrs. Piper, Male, Law, Hynes, and Webb. The speakers directed their remarks mainly to the relationship of public libraries and educational authorities, and the professional qualifications and status of librarians.

The Hon. President of the Branch, Miss Frost, Librarian and Curator, Worthing, having recently been seriously ill, a resolution of sympathy, together with best wishes for a speedy recovery was passed. Votes of thanks to Mr. Mew, the Hove Staff, and the Chairman were heartily endorsed, and a very successful meeting terminated with refreshments kindly provided by the Hove Staff.—A. W.

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**The Library Association.**—Syllabus of Information on Facilities for Training in Librarianship and the Professional Examination, 1919-20. 70 pp. 9½ in. x 6 in. [1920.] One Shilling.

So complete is the revision, that students who have not already seen a copy of the above, should obtain one from Caxton Hall as soon as possible. Full particulars are given of the Preliminary Test, which every new aspirant to the Association's Diploma is required to pass, and of a new Elementary Course, intended "to meet the needs of many students who find the ordinary course difficult, and as an alternative to the Preliminary Test." It consists of an elementary knowledge of Literary History and Book Selection, Classification, Cataloguing and Indexing, and Library Economy, all of which must be taken together. Examinations for both of these will be held in May and October. Particulars are also given of the Ordinary Course, with which all students are familiar, and of Advanced Courses "drawn up for students who are desirous of studying special subjects . . . of value . . . in the administration of special libraries." The latter may be taken singly or together, and although certificates will be issued to the successful candidates, these need not be taken as qualifications for the Diploma. They are: Historical Bibliography, History of Libraries, Palaeography and Archives, Commercial and Technical Libraries, Bibliography and History of Scholarship, and Library Development Schemes. The Syllabus also includes particulars of the facilities provided for training by means of Schools and correspondence classes, regulations relating to the Diploma, including a list of subjects already approved by the Council for these, and specimen language tests, syllabuses of the various courses, with bibliographies and previous papers, and a list of persons holding the Association's Diploma and Certificates. Altogether the Syllabus is a most valuable document, and apart from its great use to students, it should form a conclusive answer to the people who still persist in telling us that anyone can be a librarian. We hope that the Syllabus will be brought to the direct notice of every library committee in the country. The examinations for 1920 will *not* be based on the revised syllabus.

## LIBRARY SCHOOL NOTES.

The following is a synopsis of some of the work done during the first term, which came to a conclusion on 17th December.

**CATALOGUING.**—The rules for author-entry have been thoroughly dealt with, as have also the variations to be found in the different codes of cataloguing rules.

**LIBRARY ROUTINE.**—In connection with this class, two further visits have been made to libraries in order to study at first-hand, the various systems in use. At the Kensington (North Branch) Library, Mr. Wadley gave a thorough explanation of the use of the indicator system for lending library charging. A further visit was also paid to the University College Library, where Mr. Newcombe explained the method of charging employed in this library.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY.**—The principles of book-production and of bibliographical description have been explained, and visits have also been made to the British Museum for practical work.

**LITERARY HISTORY.**—There have been two classes held on this subject, one by Dr. Chambers, who dealt with the literature of the 15th and 16th centuries, and the other by Dr. Baker on 19th century literature. Dr. Baker has also delivered lectures on "Style" and the "History of the Novel," and in addition conducted the "seminar" classes.

Classes in Latin and French have also been attended by students of the School of Librarianship.

J. W. MARCH.

## OBITUARY.

We regret to record the death of Mr. MILES HARTLEY, deputy-librarian of Bradford, which took place on 27th January, after an illness of several months. Mr. Hartley received his early training at Manchester, and went to Bradford in 1894, when he was 26 years of age. He was of a retiring disposition, and generally refrained from taking any prominent part in public affairs. Nevertheless, his wide knowledge of literature made him of inestimable value to the users of the Bradford Reference Library, where his services were always at the disposal of enquirers. Mr. Hartley was a frequent contributor to the professional press, and was also the author of many other articles of bibliographical interest, including a contribution to *Book Auction Records* on "The Literary Institutions of Bradford," "A Survey of the Public Library Movement in Bradford," etc. Mrs. Hartley pre-deceased her husband by about two months, shortly after the celebration of their silver wedding.

## NEW MEMBERS.

**Members:** G. BUTCHER, Canterbury; O. G. CASELTON and F. A. MEASON, Kensington; A. RICHARDS, Bethnal Green; R. TROUT and J. W. MARCH, School of Librarianship, University College.

**Associates:** Miss M. M. PRICE, Hanwell; Miss P. M. RICHES, Croydon.

**Yorkshire Branch.—Members:** Messrs. IBBOTSON, Sheffield; A. FINNEY, S. M. BRYANT and R. DOHERTY, York; H. J. M. MALTBY and Miss FOWLER, Bradford; Mr. F. COE, Halifax; Misses M. A. BONE and E. MILLWARD, Rotherham.

**Associates:** Misses ISLES and TURNER, Leeds; Misses CRAGGS, BUCKLEY, DENISON, FIELDING, NESBIT and ORFORD, Bradford; Messrs. E. ROBERTSHAW, R. J. SELKIRK, E. WILKINSON, Bradford.

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